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School Committee Minutes 04-15-2003

THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2003
7:30 PM

Present: Suzanne Owayda, Chair Sue Sheffler
 Paul Schlichtman, Vice Chair Jeff Thielman
 Joani LaMachia, Secretary Martin Thrope
 Barbara Goodman

Supt. Kay Donovan
Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry
Chief Financial Officer: David Kale
Special Education Director: Marilyn Bisbicos

Call to order: 7:30

Newly elected Chair Suzanne Owayda thanked the Committee for their nomination and welcomed new members Sue Sheffler and Jeff Thielman. Ms. Owayda announced that all official school committee correspondence must go through Karen Tassone the executive secretary.

Ms. Owayda also explained that under school committee policy there are approximately 20 minutes set aside each meeting for public participation. The Committee may not respond to any comments or requests but can only take them under advisement.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

“ Hannah Mathes and Anna Payne Tobin performed a concerto for two violins for the School Committee at the start of the meeting.
“ APS parent and SPOT group member read a letter from SPOT requesting that the School Committee develop a prioritized list of cuts for the FY2004-2005 school year.

PEIRCE FIELD UPDATE

Alan McClenen, director of the Redevelopment Board updated the Committee of the progress on Peirce Field and reviewed the remediation plan. Mr. McClenen explained that in order to avoid incurring additional remediation costs by the Town a warrant article will be placed before town meeting to amend the wetlands bylaw. Currently Peirce Field lies in a flood plain and digging and filling is not permitted under the bylaw; however if the bylaw is not amended it could possibly cost an additional \$4.8 million that the Town will have to absorb. Mr. McClenen requested the support of the School Committee on warrant article #5.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously
Voted to support Warrant Article #5 Wetlands Bylaw Variance Provisions.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

“ Correspondence Ms. LaMachia reviewed correspondence noting the three Arlington High School Teachers receiving awards. Ms. Lucille Burt and Mr. Sheldon Obelsky have been selected to Receive The Golden Foundation for Excellence in Education award. Mr. Don Bockler has been selected by the Massachusetts Association of Science Supervisors to be inducted into the Science Educators Hall of Fame.
“ Mr. Schlichtman acknowledged receipt of correspondence from AHS parents voicing their frustration in replacing a retiring language teacher after the start of school. Mr. Schlichtman noted that there are state laws governing what

we can and cannot do regarding pensions; however there are things that could be added to our collective bargaining to provide an incentive for teachers to retire before their birthday or to stay on throughout the school year. A legislative remedy may be needed as well.

UPDATE ON AHS PRINCIPALSHIP

Supt. Donovan gave a review of the high school administration for the 2003-2003 school year. The Supt. acknowledged that at the same time Mr. Woodcock was establishing his administration, a position that allowed for increased student input and decision making participation, his efforts have been stymied by fiscal constraints.

However many positive things have happened:

- .. School spirit days,
- .. More school dances,
- .. The implementation of a class adviser and officer system for each class
- .. Increased mentoring for new teachers
- .. Enhanced graduation requirements
- .. Improved transitioning and orientation process from the OMS to AHS
- .. Weekly press releases to the Advocate of positive faculty, staff and student experiences have been created
- .. Alternative senior year experience

Supt. Donovan stated that the school year has been for the most part a positive experience for students and staff.

However the Superintendent also acknowledged that there are concerns and issues not yet addressed relative to staff morale. The Superintendent emphasized that there needs to be a continued commitment in communication with the faculty/administration to ensure that relations are on solid footing in order to move forward. Supt. Donovan is encouraged by Mr. Woodcock's hard work, long hours and the desire to excel and hopes that the next review of Stephen Woodcock will be one of continuous growth. Mrs. Donovan has extended Mr. Woodcock's contract for another year.

On a motion by Ms. Goodman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously
Voted to receive the report of the Superintendent on AHS principal Steven Woodcock.

Paul Schlichtman noted that it is a stressful time to run a high school with the uncertainty of budget constraints and noted that in looking at the NEASC report we have an administrative structure in the high school that makes it difficult for the principal to be the teaching and learning leader. Mr. Schlichtman also stated that it becomes more difficult when verbal animosity comes out in public- pointing out that we do not pay people enough to have them analyzed and criticized to the extend Mr. Woodcock has been in the front page of the Arlington Advocate. He encourages anyone who has not had the chance to speak with Mr. Woodcock to do so. When speaking with Mr. Woodcock privately on issues of educational philosophy, he has been impressed with the depth of his knowledge, philosophy and his progressive ideas. Mr. Schlichtman stated that he is not in the high school everyday and cannot do a performance evaluation of the principal-that is not his job, it is our job (School Committee) to hire a superintendent who does that work for us. Paul thanked the Superintendent for her report and hopes that as a community that we do everything we can to provide support to our leaders.

In response to Mr. Thielman's and Ms. Sheffler's request on how concerns in the NEASC report on the administration, staff moral, and the administrative structure would be addressed Supt. Donovan reported that once the formal accreditation letter is received, follow-up committees would be formed to study the report's recommendations.

Mr. Schlichtman noted that the Committee should allow the follow up committee to come back with a recommendation on how to restructure the high school administrative structure;. he does see the need to restructure with some accountability through the principal's office.

Mr. Thrope stated that the Superintendent has extended the contract of the AHS principal and emphasized that it is the Superintendent's decision and her decision alone. However, members of the Committee can express their own opinions. As a AHS parent for 12 years, who knows many faculty who have earned his respect, and when hearing that there are issues at AHS he takes those issues seriously; he believes that the Superintendent's judgment in this matter is flawed and not in the best interest of AHS or its students. He made a motion to "move no confidence in the Superintendent with respect to Mr. Woodcock's contract extension." No second on the motion.

VOTE CHANGE OF VENUE & TIME

Ms. Owayda explained that the since the public education forum on April 29th is taking place at the Town hall and is scheduled for 7:00 the Committee must vote a time and venue change.

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was Unanimously
Voted to hold the School Committee meeting of April 29, 2003 at Arlington Town Hall from 5:30 pm.
Upon hearing concerns that there would not be enough time to discuss the budget, Ms. Goodman suggested that we recess from the meeting to attend the forum and return to the meeting for unfinished business.

Mrs. Donovan reminded the Committee that she would meet with the Finance Committee the following night to present the FY2003-2004 school budget. Supt. Donovan stated that it is her intent to present three budgets: 1) a level service budget, 2) a budget with a 5.1 million dollar reduction, 3) a budget with a 2.1 million dollar reduction (dependent on a successful override).

Supt. Donovan also explained that at the Board of Selectmen meeting the previous evening there was a motion made and passed that stated that on a successful override 75% of the anticipated revenues would be for the schools and 25% would be for the Town of Arlington.

BUDGET

Budget Subcommittee Report

Ms. LaMachia reported that the budget proposal received at the last meeting was reviewed along with the budget timeline. The public hearing on the school budget will be held on May 5th tentatively scheduled at the Town Hall before Town Meeting at 7:00pm. If that is unavailable it will be held in the school committee room at 6:45 pm. A School Committee workshop with the principals to work specifically on the budget and its implementation will take place On May 12th. The Board of Selectmen voted a new date on the override June 14th, and will vote a dollar amount on the override on April 28th.

Ms. Goodman questioned why we vote the budget 1st and then hold the hearing without receiving the input from the public, Supt. Donovan explained that the public hearing must be conducted on the School Committees' proposed budget, and in order to have a proposed budget the SC must vote on it. Ms. Goodman did register disappointment that the Finance Committee is hearing the school budget on the 1st night of Passover and acknowledged the Superintendent's attempt to reschedule.

Mr. Schlichtman took note of the fact that the public hearing is part of the process. The School Committee must adopt a budget to put before the community for the public hearing; it is not a show hearing, figures can be reshuffled and reprioritized at a later date.

The Superintendent reported that the House and Senate are working on the budgets that the House budget is due out on April 23rd; that will be the figure that the Finance Committee will be working with.

Mr. Thrope pointed out that according to policy DBG the School Committee is required to hold the public hearing on the school budget two weeks prior to the opening of the annual town meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Mr. Thrope it was unanimously Voted to refer policy DBG to the policy and procedures subcommittee when that subcommittee is reconstituted. To see if they would make a recommendation to change the policy.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to submit the FY2003-2004 school budget to the Finance Committee. 6 – 1 Motion carries (Mr. Thrope-no)

Mr. Thrope would not support the motion because he has concerns about the detail; Mr. Schlichtman stated that he would vote yes because he does have concerns. Ms. Goodman also noted that she will support the vote even though she does not agree with everything; it is a working document and as a courtesy to the Finance Committee they should have a preview of what we are working on.

Ms. Owayda stated that she believes involving the administrators and principals in the implementation of the budget has been part of the missing link for the School Committee in decision making-they are part of the day to day operation and must implement the voted budget-she looks forward to working with them.

Break

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

.. Guidance Task Force – Supt. Donovan reported that the task force has been established and will return with recommendations before the end of the year. Mr. Schlichtman requested that the Committee receive the report in time to implement recommendations. The task force will be charged with recommending what the position of the director of guidance will be and what other duties will fall under that title, i.e. director 9-12, 5-1, K-12 , college and career services, and counseling services.

.. Approval of Warrant

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was

Voted to approve warrant # 03135 in the amount of \$671,382.08. 6-1 (Mr. Thrope abstained due to negative balances) Mr. Kale explained that the negative balances are due mostly to processing of internal budgets.

.. School Choice

On a motion by Mr. Thrope and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted the Superintendent's recommendation that the Arlington Public Schools will not participate as a School Choice District for the 2003-2004 school year.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

.. Policy & Procedures Ms. Owayda reported that at its subcommittee meeting of April 10th John Maher was in attendance as well as a number of parents concerned over the language in the current field trip release form. The goal of the meeting was to try to spell out what the issues were (harshness of the language and indemnification). The next step is to send a letter to Alan Miller and John Maher to try to create a release form to protect APS and the Town that will not be so harsh to the reader.

Mr. Thrope pointed out that Mr. Maher as Town Counsel did his job in protecting us but we must also take into consideration the impact of a legal document on our parents.

.. Subcommittee Assignments

Ms. Owayda requested that members fill out their wishes for subcommittee assignments and recommended establishing a new subcommittee on redistricting and eliminating the maintenance & operations subcommittee as well as the Task Force on Safety.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was unanimously

Voted to establish a subcommittee on redistricting for the 2003-2004 term of the committee

Mr. Thrope made a motion to amend the motion by adding that the subcommittee not meet until the fall. Mr. Schlichtman noted that he would not accept the amendment as a friendly one since it is uncertain what will happen with the rebuilding on the Dallin School. No second on the amendment.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded by Ms. Goodman it was

Voted to eliminate the Maintenance & Operation Subcommittee. 6-1 (Mr. Thrope voted no)

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded Ms. LaMachia it was unanimously

Voted to eliminate the Task Force on Safety.

Supt. Donovan stated that we have updated plans and protocols for every school on a compact disc with the designs of each school and an alternative safe site for each school.

Ms. LaMachia volunteered to be the School Committee liaison on the APS Safety Committee.

Ms. Owayda suggested that instead of meeting with the Student Advisory Council as a full committee that a liaison position be created and that person could meet with the Student Advisory Council and schedule meetings with the full committee as needed. Mr. Schlichtman volunteered to serve as the liaison for the Student Advisory Council.

Mr. Schlichtman reported that the Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment would meet at 5:00 pm on Monday, April 28, 2003 to discuss the AHS Program of Studies.

PTBC UPDATE

Supt. Donovan reported that correspondence received from the Commissioner of DOE states that the DOE will not accept any new schools if they were not on the list. Based on that criteria a list came forward with 28 school districts that were approved if they get their funding in place prior to June 30th. Neither the Thompson nor Stratton were placed on the list. The PTBC recommended not to go forward with the full documentation and full plans for Stratton & Thompson. We have contracted and will have plans and specifications for a deferred submittal once we know the new rules and regulations (expected after July 1st). The Dallin School is on the approved list and may be started but there is no guarantee that the State will begin reimbursing within a seven-year period. We are only allowed to borrow money and pay interest for seven years (at the present time) subsequent to that the Town of Arlington will be required principal and interest and have it paid within a 13-year time frame. That is presently before the Finance Committee for a recommendation.

NEW BUSINESS

.. Ms. Owayda reminded the School Committee that the workshop with the administrators and principals will be held on Monday May 12th 4:30 at the Robbins Library community room.

.. Ms. LaMachia referenced correspondence from Town Counsel John Maher relative to guidelines on the open meeting law and recent e-mail correspondence between Committee Members. Joani suggested a refresher training/workshop with MASC or John Maher for a better understanding on the open meeting law.

.. April 30th Rotary breakfast

.. May 1st Student government day

.. June 14- Relay for Life

Mr. Thrope requested the salary range on the position of CFO. Mr. Thrope inquired about the recent inappropriate use of e-mail in the school system from outside source. Supt. Donovan, upon investigating the matter with the Director of

Data Processing, believes that the issue has been resolved.

Mr. Schlichtman and Ms. Goodman attended Day on the Hill on April 14th,

Mr. Schlichtman as chair of resolution committee at MASC is currently working on a resolution calling for an elected State Board of Education. The current law prohibits educators to serve on the board.

On a motion by Mr. Thielman and seconded it was unanimously Voted to adjourn @ 10:40 pm.

**ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2003
7:00 PM**

Present: Barbara Goodman, Joani LaMachia, Suzanne Owayda, Paul Schlichtman, Sue Sheffler, Jeff Thielman, Martin Thrope
Supt. Donovan, Asst. Supt. Joanne Gurry, CFO David Kale

Call to Order: 7:00 PM by Barbara Goodman Chairman Pro Tempore, Mr. Thrope referred to APS policy BDA which state the senior member presides and objected stating that there are two senior members.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was
Voted to suspend the rules for the purpose of amending Policy BDA, School Committee Organizational Meeting. Roll Call: 5-1 motion carries- Ms. Sheffler abstain, Mr. Thrope did not vote stating that he believed that the meeting was illegal.

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was:
Voted to amend Policy BDA by inserting the following paragraph to follow the third paragraph in the existing policy document.

"For the purpose of defining seniority of school committee members under File BDA and File BDAA, the following rule shall apply. When two or more members are elected for the first time at the same election, and when both members have had identical lengths of service on the committee, the senior member shall be determined by the member receiving the greater number of votes received in the election in which the members were first elected."

Roll Call: 5-1 motion carries Ms. Sheffler abstain, Mr. Thrope did not vote.

Acting Chair Ms. Goodman announced that the purpose of the meeting was solely to elect officers of the School Committee for the coming year. She/He then declared the meeting open to nominations for the Office of Chairman

Election of Chairman

On a motion by Ms. LaMachia and seconded by Mr. Schlichtman it was
Moved that Suzanne Owayda be nominated for the office of Chair.

On a vote by the Committee, Ms. Goodman declared Suzanne Owayda Chair of the Arlington School Committee for 2003-2004 school year. Mr. Thrope did not vote

Election of Vice-Chair

On a motion by Ms. Owayda and seconded by Ms. LaMachia it was
Moved that Paul Schlichtman be nominated for the office of Vice-Chair.

On a vote by the Committee Ms. Goodman declared Paul Schlichtman Vice-Chair of the Arlington School Committee for 2003-2004 school year. Mr. Thrope did not vote

Election of Secretary

On a motion by Mr. Schlichtman and seconded by Ms. Owayda it was
Moved that Joani LaMachia be nominated for the office of Secretary.

On a vote by the Committee Ms. Goodman Chair declared Joani LaMachia Secretary of the Arlington School Committee for 2003-2004 school year. Mr. Thrope did not vote.

There being no further business under the policies of the Organizational Meeting, it was moved, seconded and voted

to adjourn at 7:10 PM.